



# Department of Justice

**United States Attorney David J. Freed  
Middle District of Pennsylvania**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **U.S. ATTORNEY DAVID J. FREED ENCOURAGES VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HOUSING TO REPORT WRONGDOING**

Harrisburg – U.S. Attorney David J. Freed announces that in coordination with the Department of Justice, Attorney General William Barr directed U.S. Attorneys across the nation to deploy all available enforcement tools against anyone who tries to capitalize on the current COVID-19 crisis by sexually harassing people in need of housing.

According to United States Attorney David J. Freed, as a result of the measures taken to slow the spread of COVID-19, many Pennsylvanians have lost jobs or wages. Some tenants may be unable to make rent payments. While many landlords have responded with understanding, there are reports of landlords across the country who have attempted to exploit the crisis by responding to cash-strapped tenants with demands for sex acts or inappropriate sexual favors. Such conduct is not only despicable and wrong, it is illegal.

The Department of Justice brings cases each year involving unlawful landlord conduct, including allegations that defendants requested sexual favors in exchange for reduced rents or making necessary repairs, made unrelenting and unwanted sexual advances to tenants, and evicted tenants who resisted their sexual overtures.

"Sexual harassment in housing egregiously violates a person's right to fair housing," said U.S. Attorney Freed. "We will not tolerate opportunistic landlords or property managers using the coronavirus crisis as an opportunity to extort sexual acts, or even commit assaults, against vulnerable tenants struggling to pay rent. Our office is dedicated to uncovering such violations where they exist and vigorously enforcing the law."

Anyone who has experienced sexual harassment in housing, or knows someone who has, should contact the Civil Rights Division by calling 1-(844) 380-6178 or emailing [fairhousing@usdoj.gov](mailto:fairhousing@usdoj.gov). Individuals may also present a complaint to the Civil Rights coordinator of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania by calling 717-614-4911 or emailing [usapam.civil.rights@usdoj.gov](mailto:usapam.civil.rights@usdoj.gov).

More information about the Department's Sexual Harassment in Housing Initiative is available on its webpage at <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>.

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